



STATE OF UTAH

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GOVERNOR

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Governor Herbert Outlines Solutions for Three Major Challenges Facing Utah in 2014 and Beyond

SALT LAKE CITY – (Jan. 29, 2014) During his State of the State address tonight, Gov. Gary R. Herbert outlined three major challenges facing Utahans in the coming year, and his plans for solutions. Gov. Herbert emphasized the importance of turning the attentions of government to the quickly expanding population growth in the state, which is projected to nearly double in the next 35 years. A great deal of that growth is in the student population, creating both opportunities and challenges.

With nearly 70 percent of Utah's land controlled by the federal government, the Governor stated that Utah has no chance to recoup property taxes in federal land areas in order to help pay for the anticipated growth. To achieve state education goals, the governor urged an innovative approach for the use of existing state money.

As part of that innovation, the governor announced that his new budget allocates an additional \$4.5 million to go with last year's \$10 million for the STEM Action Center. Gov. Herbert stated that the emphasis on science, technology, engineering and math will help Utah realize the goal of having 66 percent of the adult population obtain a degree or post-secondary certificate by 2020, while also preparing today's students for a modern and technologically spurred economy.

The governor also announced an additional \$2 million in his budget for high school career counseling and \$61.6 million in increased teacher compensation—the highest increase since 2008.

The governor addressed the need for cleaner air as another growth-related issue facing the state and outlined two significant steps to immediately address air quality: accelerating the transition to Tier 3 gasoline and targeted limitations on wood burning.

"The fact is, burning one log for an hour is the equivalent to driving an automobile from Salt Lake to St. George and back again," Gov. Herbert said.

As part of the effort to clean the air, the governor announced a commitment to begin immediately replacing older school buses and state vehicles with lower-emission models—a move he understands comes with a price tag.

“These actions, and others, have real costs and real impacts on all of us,” he said. “But I’m convinced the benefits to our economy, to our communities, and most importantly to our public health, will justify the costs.”

Gov. Herbert quoted James Madison when outlining the second of his three state challenges—the right to assert state sovereignty.

“Whether the issue is marriage, Medicaid or management of our public lands, our right to find Utah solutions to Utah issues is being hindered by federal overreach,” he said.

The governor restated his support of traditional marriage and his defense of State Amendment 3 while recognizing division over the issue. He called upon citizens to maintain civility and respect.

“There is no place in our society for hatred and bigotry,” he said. “Let us all remember that although these issues may be controversial, they need not be contentious.”

Turning to Medicaid expansion, the governor called the need to address a flaw in the Affordable Care Act which leaves 60,000 Utahans who live below the poverty line with less assistance than many who live above the poverty line “a moral obligation.” He said he looks forward to working with the Legislature to create a Utah model for fixing what he called “a hole in the safety net.”

During the 26-minute address, Gov. Herbert shared his relief in obtaining cooperation with National Interior Secretary Sally Jewel to re-open national public lands during the federal government shutdown.

“We were told by many in Washington there was nothing we could do to solve this problem,” he said. “We do a lot of things well in Utah, but doing nothing is not one of them.”

The governor recognized that it took efforts on both sides of the aisle working together to find the solution that resulted in a great outcome and praised Representative Brad Dee and others.

The governor says that he understands the need to optimize the use of Utah’s public lands and therefore signed House Bill 148 while continuing to work with Congressman Rob Bishop on his Public Lands Initiative, which identifies public lands for multiple-uses.

“Again, we are finding Utah solutions to Utah challenges,” he said.

The governor identified expansion of the economy as the state’s third major challenge and stated that he has a goal to increase exports by an additional \$9 billion by the end of 2015.

While heralding the economic accomplishments of the state during the past year, the governor gave credit to a state-wide “can do” attitude. He said that he understands why many businesses and professionals are choosing to relocate to Utah—because Utah knows how to recognize and overcome its challenges.